

GUNSIGHT PASS

by
WILLIAM
MACLEOD
RAINE

CHAPTER I

It was a land of splintered peaks, of deep, dry gorges, of barren mesas, of a sun-baked, million-toned, summer. The normal condition of it was warfare. Life here had to protect itself with a tough, callous skin. Only the fit survived.

Around the camp-fire the drivers of the trail herd squatted on their heels or lay sprawled at indolent ease. The glow of the leaping flames from the wasted mesquite in their lean faces, tanned to bronzed health by the heat of an untamed sun and the sweep of parched winds.

Out of the soft shadows of the summer night a boy moved from the remuda toward the camp-fire. He was a lean, sandy-haired young fellow, his figure still rank and unfitted. As he sat down on the wagon tongue the stringiness of his appearance became noticeable.

A young man waved a hand toward him by way of introduction. "Gents of the D Bar Lazy R outfit. Mr. David Sanders, formerly of Arizona, will make creation of your acquaintance and how-coming of Chiquito's superiority to all other equines whatever."

"I'd like right well to make love to that pinto my own self, Bob," commented a weather-beaten puncher. "Any old time Dave wants to saw him off onto me at sixty dollars I'm here to do business."

"You're sure an easy mark, Buck," grunted a large fat man. His white face and soft hands differentiated him from the tough range-riders. He did not belong with the outfit, but had joined it the day before with George Doble, a half-brother of the trail foreman, to travel with it as far as Malapai. He was known as Miller.

Doble backed up his partner. "Sure are, Buck. I can get cowpunches for ten and fifteen dollars—all I want of 'em," he said, and continued by the life of his lip to make the remark offensive.

"Not ponies like Chiquito," ventured Sanders amiably.

"He's some horse," explained Bob Hart. "Got a bawful of tricks, a nice disposition, and sure can burn the wind."

"You don't say." The voice of the fat man was heavy with sarcasm. "And on top of all that education he can run, too?"

The temper of Sanders began to take an edge. "I'm a champion pinto rider, a racer, but he can travel."

"Huz!" grunted Miller skeptically. "Doble wanted to me like no race, Doble disowned 'em. Why, I'd a bet he'd be to bet that pack horse of ours, Whiskey. Bill can beat him."

Bob Hart helped things along. "I've got ten bucks says the pinto can beat your Whiskey."

"Go you once," answered Doble after a moment's apparent consideration. "I got \$50 more to back the pack horse. How about it, Sanders? You got the sand to cover that?"

"Betcha a month's pay—thirty-five dollars," retorted Dave.

"Might as well use a few bucks myself, seeing as Whiskey belongs to me," said Miller with his wheezy laugh. "Who wants to take a whirl, boys?"

Inside of three minutes he had placed a hundred dollars. The terms of the race were arranged and the money put in the hands of the foreman.

An hour later Buck Brynning drew Sanders aside.

"Dave, you're a chuckle-headed rabbit. If ever I seen thimhorn sports, then two is seen Dave. He's a champion pinto rider, a racer, but he can travel. You off'n suckers. Didn't you see that come-on stuff? Their pack-horse is a ringer. Both of them are crooked as a dog's hind leg."

"Must be," admitted the young man. "But Chiquito never went back on me yet. These fellows may be overplayin' their hand, don't you reckon?"

"Not a chance," said the chuckle-headed Miller. "That chuckle-headed Miller is one fishy proposition, and his gelding Doble—say, he's the kind of bird that shoots you in the stomach while he's skinning hands with you. Me I aim to button up my pocket when them guys are around."

CHAPTER II

A course was chosen for the race. From a selected point the horses were to run to a clump of mesquite, round it, and return to the starting place. Doble was chosen both starter and judge.

Dave watched Whiskey Bill with the trained eyes of a horseman. The animal was an ugly brute as to the head, but in legs and body it had the fine lines of a racer. The horse was built for speed. The cowpuncher's heart sank. His bronco was fast, but the little range pony had not been designed to show its heels to a near-thoughtful.

"Are you ready?" Doble asked of the two men in the saddles.

"His brother said, 'Let'er go!'" Sanders nodded. The revolver barked.

Chiquito was off like a flash of light, found its stride instantly. Before it had covered seventy-five yards the pinto was three lengths to the good. Foot by foot the distance between the horses lessened to two lengths, to one, to half a length. The ugly head of the race came abreast of the cowpuncher. With a wicked certainty the range rider knew that his Chiquito was doing the best that was in it. Whiskey Bill was a faster horse.

The half-way mark was just ahead. The cowpuncher knew exactly how to make the turn with the least possible loss of speed and ground. Scarcely slackening speed, he swept the pinto round the clump of mesquite and was off for home.

Dave was halfway back before he was sure that the thud of Whiskey Bill's hoofs was almost at his heels. He called on the cowpuncher for a last

sport. The plucky little horse answered the call, gathered itself for the home stretch, for a moment held its advantage.

Then he knew that the bay was running side by side with Chiquito. The two horses raced down the stretch together, Whiskey Bill half a length in the lead, and gaining faster to the finish. Doble, above between them and they crossed the line. Chiquito had been outrun by a speedier horse.

CHAPTER III

Hart came up to his friend grinning. "Well, you old horse-toad, we got no kick comin'. Chiquito, run a mighty pretty race. Only trouble was his legs wasn't long enough."

The owner of the pony nodded, a lump in his throat. He was not thinking about his thirty-five dollars, but about the facile race into which he had allowed his little beauty to be trapped. Dave would not be 21 until coming grass, and it still hurt his pride to think that his favorite had been beaten.

The voices of George Doble cut in, openly and offensively jubilant. "I'll tell you, Sanders, that bronco never had a chance to beat Whiskey Bill."

"You're a horse man, eh?" admitted Dave.

He didn't have to take the kicks out of his legs to beat that plug.

"You got our money," said Hart quietly. "That's enough without rubbin' it in."

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GODDLEMIGHTY! SCREAMED DOBLE, LEAPING TO HIS FEET.

The usual give-and-take of gay repartee was missing at supper that night. What hurt was that they had been tricked. Doble had been outwitted. Some of them doubted now that the pack horse of the gamblers was a ringer. These men had deliberately crossed the path of the trail outfit in order to take from the victors their money.

The punchers were sulky. Instead of a fair race they had been up against an open-and-shut proposition, as Russell said. The experience of Doble did not improve their temper.

"They say one's born every minute. And dawg if I don't believe it," he sneered.

Audibly Hart murmured his sentiments about it. "I'm liable to tell these birds what I think of 'em. Sieve if they don't spend quite some time layin' off'n us."

"Don't tell us out loud. We might hear you," advised Doble insolently. "In regards to that, I'd sure worry if you did."

Dave was at that moment returning to his place with a cup of hot coffee. By some perverse trick of fate his glance fell on Doble's sinister face of malignant triumph. His self-control snapped, and in an instant the course of his life was deflected from its path. It would otherwise have taken, with a lip he tossed the tin cup so that the hot coffee sizzled the crook's nose. "Goddlemighty!" screamed Doble, leaping to his feet. He reached for his forty-five, just as Sanders closed with him.

Miller, with surprising agility for a fat man, got to his feet and launched himself at the puncher. Dave flung the smaller of his opponents back against Steve, who was sitting tailor-fashion behind him. The gunnibit roared and fell over Russell, who lost no time in pinning his hands to the ground while Hart deftly removed the revolver from his pocket.

Swinging round to face Miller, Dave saw at once that the big man had chosen not to draw his gun. In spite of his fat the gambler was a rough-and-ready, and in a style far in excess of what had come in recent years, but underneath it lay roped muscles and heavy bones.

Instantly Dave plunged at him. They went down, locked together. Dave underneath. The puncher knew that if he had room Miller would hammer his face to a pulp. He drew himself close to the barrel body, arms and legs wound tight like hoops.

"Lemme loose!" shrieked the man on top. "My Gawd, you're killin' me!"

Doble had not the least idea what was disturbing Miller's peace of mind, but whatever it was moved to his advantage. He clamped tighter, working his heels into another secure position. The big man bellowed with pain.

"What's all this?" demanded an impatient voice.

Miller was torn howling from the arms and legs that bound him and Dave found himself jerked roughly to his feet. The big, rawboned foreman was glaring at him above his large hook nose.

(Continued in our Next Issue)

BORROWED HUSBANDS

By
MILDRED K. BARBOUR

III—INDOMITABLE WILL

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Constance Stanley was taken to the hospital for an operation that afternoon.

Despite her pain, the old indomitable will persisted. She told everybody just what he or she was to do in her absence.

"Nancy, I want you to take my place at the charity bazaar and look after the house here. It would be a good arrangement for you anyway, for I don't believe you are going to get possession of your apartment again for a long time."

"But I can't stay here," cried Nancy in dismay. "Curtis will be back in a day or so. I really think you ought to let me send for him now. He'll be frightfully distressed that you didn't let him know."

"I won't have it!" declared Constance. "I don't want anyone sitting around watching me die."

"For the first time her fine will broke. She turned her head aside and wept bitterly."

"Constance, don't weep! Of course you're going to be alright."

"Of course," agreed Constance after a moment. "In case I'm not, my will is in the little compartment on the left-hand side in the wall safe. I've left my jewels to mother. Curtis is to have all the bonds I own. I want you to take my personal possessions. There are a couple of paradise feathers and—"

"For Heaven's sake!"

Nancy laid a hand over the sufferer's lips, but the latter pushed it petulantly aside, and went on calmly:

"Remember, I want to be cremated. If anyone tries to tell me I swear I'll rise right up and register a protest. And I won't have a minister preaching any sermons over me! Remember that! Don't put them put any white roses around my face. They're the most unbecoming thing I know of!"

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Nancy went hastily downstairs to summon Dr. Langwell.

"Please come and do something for Constance. She's getting terribly morbid."

"That's natural. It won't hurt her," he replied.

It was stretched out comfortably in a deep chair in the Stanley's library, smoking one of Curtis' cigars.

"She told me she wanted you to stay here and take charge of her house. Are you going to do it?"

"How can I?" protested Nancy. "There's Curtis to consider. There would be a terrible scandal."

The doctor chuckled.

"Not about you, my dear girl! If any young woman can take care of herself, I should say that one was going to take care of her house."

"I don't know what you mean," said Nancy. "I should say that one was going to take care of her house."

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ADVENTURES OF THE TWINS

By OLIVE ROBERTS BARTON



Buskins was sitting on it and smiling.

One day Nick sat on a green apple and it made him sick. So after that he and Nancy were not allowed to go near their favorite apple-tree. That was very hard to hear and more of a punishment than their mother knew, for without the magical elevator they couldn't see their fairy friend Buskins, nor could they make any more visits to the strange country of Up-in-the-Air.

The blossoms in the orchard had disappeared, so the twins could no longer play that it was a fairy tower. It was more fun down in the meadow under their beloved chestnut tree, the place where all their adventures began. The first daisies were out, the weather being very warm, and Nancy started to pick a bouquet for the dinner table, thinking it more fun to pick flowers than to pick apples.

Suddenly a voice called out, "Hello, there!" answered the twins to—

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either, looking around in a puzzled way, wondering who had spoken.

But no one was to be seen. The voice was very small and far away. Indeed it seemed to come from the ground. Could it be Flop Field Mouse or Abigail Ant or one of the forest or meadow folk?

"Where are you?" called Nick. "We can't see anybody."

"Look hard," came the answer, "and see if you can't find me. I'm not as big as I was. I suppose I've shrunk in the wash."

"Would you like to go to Thistle-down Land?" he asked when he found he had been discovered.

(To Be Continued)

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